

Farewell stirs rich memories

IT'S A goodbye of sorts. Then again, it's not.

While saying "so long" to Farmington, I'll be nodding "hello" to Birmingham. Beginning next week, my beat at the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers will shift from coverage of the city of Farmington and Farmington Public Schools to — well — whatever my new editor chooses as my focus.

I'm told it will mostly be the city of Birmingham and nearby municipalities. It's new, it's exciting, and, for me, it will be kind of like going home.

I GREW UP in the Birmingham/Bloomfield area — something I never used to admit because of the people I encountered who cried, "silver spoon kid!" and branded me a snob. It was there that I learned to ride a bicycle, went through 13 years of school, worked a co-op job in downtown Birmingham and accumulated lots of memories, both good and bad. It's been many years since I lived in the area, but it will always represent my childhood.

For nearly four years, I've grown to think of the Farmington area as a home as well.

This community has embraced



Casey Hans

me, allowing me to do the job of keeping you informed. I hope new readers will do the same.

THERE ARE a lot of Farmington memories to tuck away and save for future times. Certainly lots of breaking news and interesting features, but mostly, I'll remember the people.

During the past two weeks, I've said goodbye to many, but Monday night's city council meeting nearly brought tears to my eyes.

I know, it used to be that covering these darned political meetings was enough to make me cry. But saying goodbye to that bunch at city hall was like leaving home to go to college.

I've always enjoyed the small-town atmosphere of this beat and the people who go along with it — from the council watchers to those I deal with daily at city hall.

AS FOR city manager Bob Deadman, I thought one of these days I'd write his retirement story, a sad note for the city. But that will fall to someone else in the future.

Then there are the many people at the school district who I could never begin to call — they'll just have to read about it. The principals, teachers, parents, kids and everyone at central office — it's hard to believe many people you meet in four years.

Our most recent superintendent, Graham Lewis, has said goodbye to no one. So I won't wish him farewell either.

But I will say goodbye to acting super Mike Flanagan, who has always gone out of his way to help this reporter, and ultimately you, understand the issues since he returned to the district in 1985.

Whoever takes my place will have the fun of covering many special school board meetings this year with numerous issues to write about. Just do that new reporter a favor, and keep those meetings short, will you guys?

Casey Hans is a staff writer for the Farmington Observer.

points of view

Ambiguity is film's brilliance

WAKE UP.

That's the opening line from Spike Lee's new film, "Do The Right Thing." And right there, both in the opening and title, lies its ambiguity — and its brilliance.

In fact, at 8 a.m. Monday, on a cooler summer day than Lee depicts, in Birmingham, not Brooklyn, 25 people — suburban whites and blacks — showed up at The Community House to probe what indeed this amazing film is all about.

Who, in fact, is Lee asking to wake up? And what, in fact, is the right thing to do?

Lending a practiced eye as well as a wealth of background in film to the discussion was Lewis Beale, a Free Press reporter recently transferred from L.A. where he had been a film industry reporter for the Los Angeles Daily News. He and his wife are new residents of Birmingham.

And those he was leading were members of the Birmingham-Bloomfield Task Force on Race Relations and Ethnic Diversity. They are the concerned people who recently put on the community forum in response to the racial problems in Birmingham schools and who now are planning a fall community-wide conference on achieving a diverse community.

BEALE, WHO is white, criticized the white media, particularly the all-important New York City white me-



Judith Doner Berne

dia, for misinterpreting the film, for seeing it as "a very New York picture" and a call to racial violence.

No, this is not just a New York City film. As Marla Fennite, a white former Detroit teacher now from Bloomfield Hills said, "You don't have to go far from here to see that street. The rage is not surprising at all."

Said Dana Cunningham, a black from West Bloomfield, "I think Spike makes his pictures for black people." Her interpretation of "Wake up" is that blacks need to learn to take care of themselves economically.

Blacks haven't done what other immigrant groups have, she said. They haven't gone from the pushcart, to a bigger pushcart, to the stand, to a store. "Historically, blacks who have done that have been murdered, have been 'fired' out of business."

In the film, blacks want the Italian pizza parlor owner to put up photographs of blacks on the wall and they taunt the Korean couple who owns a

small fruit and vegetable store.

Beverly Knight, a black from Birmingham, says that in the neighborhood where she grew up the fact that none of the markets are owned by blacks is "a constant issue."

MUCH OF the discussion of what is indeed "the right thing" turned on the film's ending, which featured a quote from Martin Luther King urging non-violence followed by one from Malcolm X, ostensibly urging violence.

"The movie stands on its own. It doesn't need that benediction," said Rev. Almus Thorp Jr., from Christ Church Cranbrook.

Beale sees the film and the ending as stating that when you are attacked, you attack back.

"Do The Right Thing" is "one of the most important racial films made in this country in the last 10 years," Beale says.

It will may be, for whatever your interpretation, the scenario it depicts is real — the growing rage of the young black community.

How the current backward march in civil rights will play into all of this is a clear question. But it's one we all, city dwellers and suburbanites, blacks and whites, had better attend to pretty quick.

Wake up.

Judith Doner Berne is assistant managing editor for the Oakland editions of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

Supporting the arts essential

LIVE THEATER, dance, music, the movies — they're all a reflection of the cultural patterns of a community.

No matter the demographics, a community needs the arts to live and grow. Without the arts, a community will eventually dwindle and perish.

I was thinking about that the other day as I was hosted to a tour through the Birmingham Village Players playhouse by members John Reddy and Art Underwood.

Many of you will remember Art as proprietor of the Little Professor Bookstore on Grand River in Farmington. John is an editorial executive here at the paper who is reluctant to mix his activities. But because of my interest in the theater, he finally consented to a tour of his other life.

It was a delight. The Village Players, which has raised the curtain for more than 40 years, is one of the more successful local theater groups around. At present, the playhouse is being renovated to open for yet another season in September.

But they are not alone. The Village Players, and many other groups like them, reflect that sense of community that often is lost as our met-



Steve Barnaby

ropolitan area grows and thrives.

They are a splitted bunch. To survive, they have to be. Live theater, even at its most successful, is a struggling venture.

Many don't survive. But the arts in our area has always had a fringe existence. As we can see by recent events in the metro area, the arts is a hard sell.

IN CONTRAST, anyone traveling to Toronto, North America's premiere big city, can see how support of the arts fits into the vitality of a community. Now whether it's a reflection of success or a cause of it can be debated. But it's there, an integral part of everyday life as are the streets full of people at all times of the day and night.

Metro Detroit isn't so lucky. Our

symphony is struggling, unable to even meet the payroll. The quality of our live theater is spotty at best in comparison to other major cities.

When the going gets tough in school districts, the first things to go are music programs and library services.

Certainly some hopeful signs of support do exist. We all owe a big thanks to pizza king Mike Ilitch for the renovation of the Fox Theatre, which is packing the 4,000-plus seat theater every night for showings of the four-hour Lawrence of Arabia.

If you haven't seen it, make sure you do. It is a pleasure to experience a quality movie on a large screen as it was meant to be viewed rather than in one of these living room-sized theaters in the shopping malls.

Besides the movies, the Fox has brought in some top-notch live entertainment. Hopefully, the trend continues.

So take some time to see some of the great artistic offerings the metro area has to offer, whether it be your local community theater or some other art of your choosing.

Your support will make for a better community, and you'll have a good time while you're at it.

The writer, Oscar E. Roberto, is a Farmington resident.

THE FOUNDERS Festival was once again, a big success. It was something we can all be proud of having in our community.

It is too bad the Knights of Columbus (St. Francis Council, Farmington Hills) saw fit to detract from the atmosphere by carrying a "Right To Life" banner in the parade.

We all have the right to our religious and political beliefs, but the parade was not the occasion or the place to be partisan or to try to force your religion on others.

The Knights of Columbus certain-

guest column

ly were not representing the community as a whole and, as a matter of fact, the sign was considered offensive by many. For that reason, they should not have been allowed to display the banner.

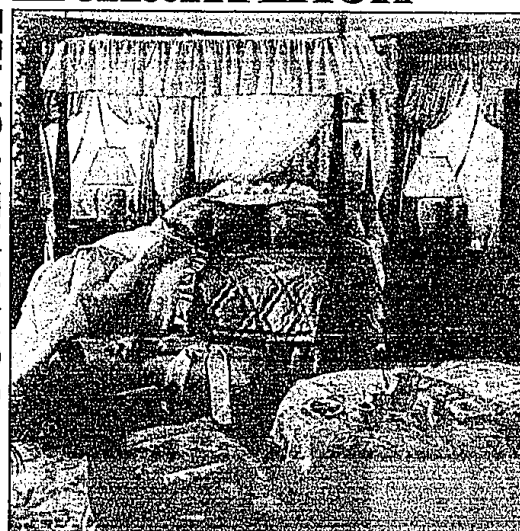
Something similar could be said about the creationism float (Creation Science Association of Southeast

Ethan Allen

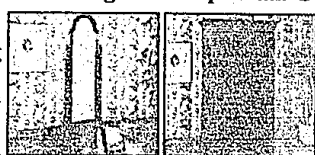
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